

**MEASURING LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFECTIVENESS: "HOW WILL  
MUNICIPAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES EVALUATE THEIR  
IMPACT ON COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BY THE  
YEAR 2007?"**

**JOURNAL ARTICLE**

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**This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.**

**Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.**

**Managing the future means influencing the future--creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.**

**The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).**

## **Internet-Based View of the Future**

In 1998 many American cities are enjoying the benefits of an unprecedented economic resurgence. Fueled by seemingly boundless growth of financial markets and renewed commercial investments during the past several years, some communities have changed their economic destinies, literally breathing new life into their overall standard of living.

Those cities having yet to realize their full potential in this arena, are endeavoring to create climates that will improve their economic competitiveness. Whether they are attempting to revitalize economic conditions or strengthen them, many communities have acknowledged the role crime, resident fear, and public disorder play in encouraging urban flight and promoting deterioration in their quality of life.

Beginning with the advent of the Community Policing philosophy, the law enforcement community has increasingly become a partner in community reclamation efforts. In many instances, it has taken a leadership role in forming the partnerships and developing the strategies that have made such collaborative approaches successful.

Recently, law enforcement agencies in such U.S. cities as New Orleans, Louisiana and Los Angeles, California, among others, have followed the lead of the New York City Police Department's *compstat* approach, which relied upon computer statistics to identify areas of crime and disorder within the city. Once identified, officers then instituted enforcement strategies aimed at improving quality of life by mounting coordinated and highly visible campaigns to alleviate those conditions. "Surveys showed that more than half the people who had recently left the city [New York] did so

to improve the quality of their lives.”, stated former New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton, recounting his experiences there. <sup>1</sup>

On the heels of New York's unprecedented reductions in crime were the creation of new businesses, increased college enrollments, a rebound in tourism, more housing starts, and reductions in office vacancy rates. <sup>2</sup> While these economic changes have not been *scientifically* attributed to the compstat approach, they arguably bear witness to the results of quality of life improvements New York City now enjoys.

In *Fortune* magazine's 1997 top ten list of the nation's most *improved* cities, New York was ranked first. “Today it's rare to find a city that hasn't shown some economic improvement during these recent heady bull-market years...We looked not only at pure improvement over a five-to-ten-year period, but also at factors that measure the business viability of a city and the quality of life there.” <sup>3</sup>

The level of crime, one of the conditions considered by *Fortune* in its selection of cities, has long been a factor the business sector takes into account when making decisions concerning the location or expansion of their operations. Many communities, who have relentlessly pursued such economic *plums* as anchors for local development efforts, are keenly aware of this component of the business sector's decision-making process. Accordingly, they have strengthened their resolve to reduce the impact crime has on their ability to recruit and retain such business interests.

## FRAMING THE ISSUE

Amid the scramble to duplicate the New York experience, a great deal of debate is occurring both within and outside the law enforcement community concerning the

efficacy of the compstat approach. Much of the controversy focuses on whether it can be credited with the reductions in crime witnessed in New York, or if other factors, such as a peaking of the crack cocaine epidemic or a cyclical decline in overall crime nationwide, are more realistic contributors.

Such concerns notwithstanding, central to this larger discourse is the continuing examination of an issue critical to the law enforcement community - measuring the effectiveness of non-traditional strategies, fostered by community policing, that are aimed at reducing crime and improving the quality of life.

Since its inception, community policing has presented performance measurement challenges that have exceeded the reach of quantitative, *output-based* assessments, such as calls for service, arrest data, and reported crime, law enforcement has traditionally used to gauge its effectiveness. While these activity measurements remain viable for conventional law enforcement activity, the profession has repeatedly acknowledged their limitations in terms of the newer, problem-solving approaches now being employed.

To examine this issue and its relationship to how law enforcement might measure its impact on economic activity, the focus of the *futures* research that was conducted, a *Delphi* study was instituted to provide insight into the question: *"How will municipal law enforcement agencies evaluate their impact on community economic development by the year 2007?"*

The inquiry began with a review of existing literature related to the issue question. Next, a panel of 28 experts was assembled to participate in an Internet-based, nationwide trend and event forecasting effort, utilizing a modified Delphi

process.

The literature review immediately identified the existence of a *sub-question* of what *should* be measured, which required examination before a full consideration of the primary research question could be conducted. This secondary question surfaced while examining the variety of strategies and activities in which law enforcement currently engages under the community policing umbrella.

For example, an excerpt from a report on a recent series of forums sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services provides useful examples of the challenges law enforcement currently faces in this arena:

"We confronted another issue: What other indicators should gauge police effectiveness? Fear? Disorder? Public Satisfaction? Public trust and confidence? If these are additional indicators that the police are doing well, by what logic do we hypothesize that the police can affect these more ephemeral, but equally compelling indices of societal well-being?" <sup>4</sup>

In posing the question regarding society's well-being, the report identified the issue at the heart of the current dilemma in law enforcement and provided a starting point for examining the question of what should be measured - the concept of *quality of life*, which provides much of the objective basis for many of the strategies and approaches law enforcement presently employs under the mantle of community policing.

## REVISITING QUALITY OF LIFE

In the law enforcement community, the concept of quality of life is frequently

used to describe those desired community living conditions that are achieved by the absence or reduction of *crime, public disorder, resident fear*, and general conditions of community *blight and deterioration*.<sup>5</sup> While this working definition provides a law enforcement specific view of this concept, which has become the theoretical basis for many of the strategies being used to address it, quality of life is born from a much larger context.

In a 1997 Rand Institute publication entitled, Linking Sustainable Community Activities to Pollution Prevention: A Sourcebook, author Beth Lachman states, "Most sustainable community definitions focus on long-term integrated systems approaches, healthy communities, and quality-of-life issues by addressing economic, environmental, and social issues. The concept [*sustainable communities*] recognizes that economic, environmental, and social issues are interdependent and interrelated."<sup>6</sup>

In this treatment of the concept, its multi-dimensional nature and characteristics are acknowledged. Rather than viewing it from a single perspective, it is considered the sum total of its parts within its contextual framework - the wider community.

Demonstrating parallels in its considerations of community *desirability*, which is used to determine the viability of business relocations, corporate America commonly includes economic conditions, educational opportunities, and cultural amenities in conjunction with crime when appraising a community's overall quality of life.

The livability conditions considered in both examples provide a much broader assessment of a community's health beyond crime and disorder. They also suggest the need to consider an expanded definition from a law enforcement perspective,

particularly when viewed against the backdrop of the community policing philosophy, which espouses a community-wide approach to addressing the social ills that contribute to crime.

A broader law enforcement definition of quality of life that includes such economic factors as business activity and employment creation, in conjunction with crime and disorder-related conditions would be beneficial. In study after study, the case establishing links between unemployment, poverty, and crime has been made repeatedly. It, therefore, appears reasonable that law enforcement efforts to address quality of life issues would also include consideration of economic issues as well.

Recent experience has taught law enforcement that a community or neighborhood in which crime and disorder have been displaced is much more likely to either maintain its restored state when those conditions are supplanted by quality of life improvements, many of which are economic. This is the essence of the philosophy on which the federally sponsored *Weed and Seed*<sup>7</sup> program has been based for many years.

For the most part, economic development activities parallel law enforcement efforts to address conditions adverse to a community's quality of life. Moreover, by establishing a shared reference point, police agencies not only acquire a new benchmark from which to gauge their performance, but also definitively include the resources necessary to collaboratively address complex social issues, like crime, in a community policing framework.



## **FUTURES STUDY**

To gain insight about the issue's future, a panel of experts, reflecting disciplines and experience related to the study question, took part in an Internet-based, modified Delphi process to identify and forecast environmental trends and events they felt would have the greatest impact on the research question. They subsequently identified those trends and events emerging or occurring in the social, technological, economic, environmental, and political arenas that could influence the future of the study issue.

The trends and events identified, were then subjected to a *cross impact* analysis to determine the most prominent in either category and those having the greatest propensity for interaction. Those trends and events meeting this requirement were then used to create a scenario designed to approximate a desired future state. The trends & events used in the scenario's creation were:

### **Trends**

- *Increased demand for quality and cost-effective government services.*
- *Increasing relevance of local economic indicators.*

### **Events**

- *Arrival of a new industrial employer in a local community.*
- *Loss of current business and industry.*
- *Election of political interests to political office who believe in governmental privatization.*

## **Scenario**

The scenario on which the selected trend/event set was based was designed as a fictitious news article, published in the most prominent newspaper in the state's capitol city - Sacramento, California. The scenario that follows, which may or may not occur, identifies the desired future state. It also represents the foundation upon which a strategic plan is developed to achieve the change necessary for its attainment.

### **Police Agencies Play Role In Improving Local Economies** **The Sacramento Bee - January 3, 2007**

The California economy and the economies of local communities appear to show increasing signs of improvement at years end. Employment rates have maintained record levels, as have business start-ups and corporate relocations into the state, a reversal of previous trends. A portion of this success has been attributed to the efforts of many of the state's police agencies, who in the year 2000, instituted a community policing strategy aimed at enhancing economic development in their respective communities. The result: many communities have shown marked increases in local economic indicators that point to improved economic activity.

In 1999, the California Commission On Peace Office Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) Announced the formation of a multi-disciplinary task force to examine law enforcement's role in impacting community economic development.

The task force, composed of representatives from the public and private sectors, explored the connection between community policing strategies and the economic resurgence witnessed in some U.S. cities at the time. The task force ultimately developed a model for California law enforcement agencies to use to implement similar strategies in their communities.

Cited as additional reasons for the task force's formation were public demands for more cost-effective government services and a growing philosophy among elected officials to privatize some government services, according to officials at the state Chambers of Commerce Association.

"Economic turnarounds in New York City, New Orleans and other cities

after police agencies instituted various community policing strategies that reduced crime rates initially captured our interest.”, said P.O.S.T.’s Executive Director, Kenneth O’Brien. “There appeared to be some connection in those communities where community policing strategies had been used.”

He later added, “What we hoped to accomplish through the efforts of the task force was to explore those connections and develop a model that police agencies throughout the state could use to improve quality of life in their communities, many of whom had been receiving inquiries about the subject through letters and agency websites.”

Praising the task force’s work, O’Brien stated, “We took a close and careful look at this issue before we made any specific claims and found we could develop the model being used today.”

## **STRATEGIC PLAN & TRANSITION MANAGEMENT**

An effective strategic plan is critical to the achievement of meaningful and lasting organizational or systemic change. Significant change, of the type embodied in the study issue, must not only be planned to reduce negative impacts on the organization or system, its transition must also be effectively managed to ensure successful movement from the present to the future state.

The sub-issue of what should be measured, which was an inherent part of the research question, played a significant role in the development of the strategic plan. In the effort to identify how to measure law enforcement’s impact on community economic development, the need to re-examine the basis (improving the *quality of life*) of the strategies that would be used in this regard became apparent.

The recommendation to either identify or broaden the definition of this concept became a necessary *pre-condition* for the establishment of an alternative evaluation method. Further, widespread *acceptance* of this concept among law enforcement

practitioners would require intervention strategies aimed at gaining the necessary commitment to implement such a conceptual change.

### **Mission Statement**

The environment in which the change would take place was defined as the state of California, consequently a mission statement for the California law enforcement community was developed to engender the necessary vision and commitment level among key stakeholders:

***By the year 2007, law enforcement, in fulfilling its purpose to protect life and property through the enforcement of laws, the investigation of crime, and the arrest of offenders, will also promote total community quality of life by addressing fear, public disorder and related conditions through active collaboration with and support of those community segments impacting it. Finally, law enforcement will endeavor to measure and evaluate its impact and effectiveness through traditional and non-traditional means.***

This mission statement, encompassing both the traditional and community policing-inspired mission of law enforcement, definitively expands law enforcement's role while simultaneously depicting its *reason for being*. Additionally, it provides an expanded treatment of the quality of life concept and its causative factors. Finally, it establishes an interdependence with the environment external to law enforcement, necessary to achieve the desired change. Most importantly, however, it furnishes groups and individuals participating in the change process a vision of the future state.

### **Change Structure**

As indicated in the scenario, the *change management structure* used to

implement the change would consist of a *state-wide task force*, charged with accomplishing, among other objectives:

- *The development of a pilot program designed to examine the change in a real environment.*
- *The encouragement of the adoption of pilot recommendations through the development of an implementation model.*
- *The promotion of the task force's accomplishments through the use of media coverage, panel discussions, and professional forums.*

Incorporated in these and other tasks force objectives would be efforts to advance an expanded definition of the quality of life concept.

### **Transition Techniques**

To assist in the transition to the desired state, a core group of stakeholders, representing the *critical mass* of participants necessary to ensure successful change, was then developed. It included: *Chief governmental administrative officers; local elected officials; law enforcement agency heads; law enforcement rank & file; neighborhood association representatives; law enforcement leadership organizations; and business associations.*

These groups were then assigned various *assumptions* concerning their likely view of the potential change. Based on these assumptions, each group was then assessed relative to its likely *commitment* to the change process. Although all groups exhibited commitment levels that would not hinder the change, the transition *intervention techniques* of education relative to the issue and a *reward system* were utilized to increase identified commitment levels.

The *law enforcement agency heads* group was targeted for the latter technique, with the goal of increasing their projected commitment level from *helping the change happen* to *making it happen*. This would be accomplished by incorporating financial incentives or rewards for this group for successful attainment of the desired state and, conversely, reducing its perceived risks by insulating it from adverse impacts should the desired state not be achieved.

### A FUTURE VISION

As the environmental conditions enabling the realization of the future state occur, the law enforcement community will have the opportunity to proactively respond by adjusting the strategies it employs and by developing new evaluation modalities.

In seeking the answer to the question, "*How will municipal law enforcement agencies evaluate their impact on community economic development by the year 2007?*", the research identified two trends that will provide the greatest opportunity to achieve the desired state: *Increasing demand for quality and cost-effective government services.*, and *Increasing relevance of local economic indicators*. These trend's interactions with the forecasted events provide the basis for the question's answer.

In addition to decreasing the incidence of crime and eliminating visible signs of public disorder, the former trend will be the driving force for law enforcement's development of *new services* for the business community. Such services could range from *providing enhancements to community safety* to bolster the creation of business and *creating new partnerships with the business community* to market community safety to firms and groups that are targets for recruitment to a given community.

The latter trend will provide the means of evaluating these new activities. By monitoring existing and developing new indicators of local economic activity, law enforcement will be able to determine the effects of strategies it employs to impact them. As a result, law enforcement managers will be armed with additional data to guide its decisions concerning resource management and deployment in this arena.

Additional research establishing causative linkages between agency strategies and economic impacts will be necessary to create strategic models for this approach, however, this can be accomplished through the use of pilot programs and the establishment of partnerships created during the course of the strategic plan's implementation.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study identified a new evaluation approach to an emerging trend in many communities nationwide that is just beginning to affect law enforcement. Additionally, it is increasingly evident that this trend's emergence is also raising the expectations of elected officials, the public, and the media regarding what law enforcement can accomplish.

Impacting economic development has historically not been considered a law enforcement responsibility. Yet neither has building abatement, refuse collection, neighborhood clean-ups, and many other interventions now being employed. Each of these activities share the goal of improving a community's quality of life. Assuming there is significant agreement concerning this goal within the law enforcement community and a corresponding belief that economic development contributes to its

attainment, then it too becomes another facet of law enforcement's *changing* role.

Beckhard and Harris, in their publication, Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change state, "The forces requiring change in large systems today tend to originate *outside* the organization." <sup>8</sup> The change recommended within the law enforcement community as a result of this research represents the actualization of this principle.

The scenario depicted in the study was designed to represent realistic issues that could influence the future of law enforcement. The conditions they describe present an opportunity for law enforcement to either choose its own destiny or have it decided by external forces. In either event, the future will arrive. Whether we are prepared for it will depend on the actions we take today.



## ENDNOTES

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